

Meeting with Duncan Burton and Lisa Ritchie: 25th August 2022

In attendance: Duncan Burton – Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Lisa Ritchie – Lead for Infection Protection and Control, Alison Twycross and Clare Rayner

Reasons for asking for a meeting

- Alison started the meeting by explaining that she had contacted Duncan as a registered nurse, a patient and editor of Evidence Based Nursing (EBN) .
- From a professional point of view her awareness of the issues having written a [blog](#) about the need for RPE for NHS staff (July 2022).
- The next day the RCN published a [critique of the methodology UKHSA](#) used for their rapid review of the literature
- As a patient who is clinically extremely vulnerable Alison has becoming increasingly aware that NHS staff are no longer wearing masks and when they are they are surgical masks rather than FFP2/3s.
- As editor of EBN and an RN, Alison is aware that the NMC Code makes it clear we need to practice in line with the best available evidence and that there is increasing evidence demonstrating that covid is airborne.
- Given this, Alison would have expected all NHS staff to be wearing fitted FFP3 masks routinely.

Summary of discussion

- Lisa responded to the RCN publication saying that they hadn't agreed with the previous report. This report was written by the same authors and they had some issues with it.
- Lisa said they were working towards a position where protections for staff were lifted and ways of working returned to as they were pre-pandemic.
- Lisa said repeatedly that the "pandemic is over".
- Lisa did not feel the need to provide RPE for staff as they could catch covid in the pub and that masks were low down on the IPC hierarchy of protections. (This was repeated on several occasions.)
- Clare acknowledged that masks were low down on the hierarchy of protections but said the WHO were now recommending fitted FFP3 masks for healthcare staff. This was important due to poor ventilation in many health care settings.
- Given the likelihood of staff catching Covid-19 at work Alison and Clare felt it was important that protections were upgraded rather than removed. This is particularly important as repeated acute covid infections increase the likelihood of post-covid sequelae and is also a patient safety risk.

Alison and Clare highlighted that:

- o Other people have concluded that current IPC guidelines are not fit for purpose.

- The duties laid down by law (e.g. Health & Safety and Equality) are paramount and not necessarily negated by Government guidance or policy.

- Duncan and Lisa reported being lobbied by many people about this issue – from both sides of the argument.

- Clare said that the UKSHA/IPC did not include professionals with expertise and qualifications in environmental risk management, including hazard and risk management and safety management, occupational hygienists, occupational medicine, etc.

- Lisa replied that *“at first, IPC had no experience of the ‘Hierarchy of Controls’ - one of the legal bases of environmental hazard protection-and went onto say “agree, the committee didn’t know about this but it was a rapid learning curve, and now we know about it. But the pandemic is now over (repeatedly said) and we need to move on. We will know about the Hierarchy of Controls for the next pandemic.”*

Alison Twycross

Clare Rayner